



JOINT U.S. MISSION/GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE PRESS RELEASE

Sierra Leone Participates in Medical Safety Exercise

As cooperation with Sierra Leone during and after the Ebola epidemic remains exemplary, Sierra Leone was selected for the second transatlantic flight of medical airplanes specially designed to transport patients with infectious diseases to other locations where they can receive treatment. This follows a smaller, inaugural exercise which was done in Liberia in November 2016.

On April 11-12, the US Department of State demonstrated the U.S. Government's state-of-the-art Containerised Bio-containment System (CBCS) used to facilitate the air transport of critically ill patients who need to be completely isolated from others. This event took place during an exercise titled 'Tranquil Shift' as the CBCS returned from Freetown, Sierra Leone en route to five medical centres in the United States on two retrofitted 747 aircraft and three small aircraft.

Sierra Leone was chosen for this exercise because of impressive progress that it has made in detecting and diagnosing infectious disease, and the strong and effective collaboration between the Sierra Leonean government and the U.S. government. Government of Sierra Leone personnel, under the overall coordination of the Office of National Security, participated in the exercise.

The best practices for medical evacuation continues to evolve and this new bio-containment system will be able to safely transport critically ill patients with illnesses that may pose a serious public health threat, by air across the world. Previous systems could only transport one patient at a time. The exercise involved flying the planes from their airbase in Atlanta to Sierra Leone and back to the U.S. In Sierra Leone, eleven Americans acting as patients were loaded on to the planes and transported to specialised infectious disease treatment centres in Nebraska, Minnesota, Colorado, Maryland and New York using the special isolation units that form the core of the containerised bio-containment system.

It is important to recognise that there are no known cases of Ebola in Sierra Leone at this time, and this exercise helps to ensure that vigilance and preparedness for any new outbreak is maintained.

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